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**For immediate release**

***September is “National Campus Fire Safety Month”***

*The Center for Campus Fire Safety* has designated September as “*National Campus Fire Safety Month*” with the goal of raising national awareness about the importance of protecting our young adults. In West Virginia from January 2000 through December 2008, there were 96 reported fires with 1 fire death and \$578,760 in total estimated property loss due to fire occurring in college housing such as dorms, fraternities, sororities and barracks. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated annual average of 3,300 fires in the same types of structures between 2002 and 2005. These fires averaged per year 7 civilian deaths, 46 civilian fire injuries, and \$25 million in direct property damage.



**THE FACTS**

- In cases where fire fatalities occurred on college campuses, alcohol was often a factor. There is a strong link between alcohol and fire deaths. In many adult fire fatalities, victims were under the influence at the time of the fire. Alcohol abuse often impairs judgment and hampers evacuation efforts.
- 72% of the reported fires involved cooking equipment. The most common time for fires is during the evening hours and on weekends.



**THE FIRE RISKS**

- Four common factors in deadly campus fires are: lack of fire sprinkler systems; missing or disabled smoke alarms; careless disposal of smoking materials and impaired judgment from alcohol use.
- Misuse and carelessness with smoking materials and candles are the leading causes of civilian campus deaths from 2002-2005.
- *Student apathy is prevalent.* Many are unaware that fire is an actual risk or threat.
- Evacuation efforts are hindered since fire alarms are often ignored.

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- Misuse of cooking appliances, overloaded electrical circuits and extension cords increase the risk of fires.
- Vandalized and improperly maintained smoke alarms and fire alarm systems inhibit early detection of fires as well as prompt evacuation.



### **HOW YOU CAN REDUCE AND PREVENT LOSS OF LIFE AND PROPERTY IN ON- AND OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING:**

- Look for *fully sprinklered* housing when choosing a dorm or off-campus housing (most college fire deaths actually occur in off-campus housing).
- *Never disable a smoke alarm* or any other fire protection equipment. This is not only a crime, it endangers everyone in the building and responding firefighters.
- Regularly inspect rooms and buildings for fire hazards. Ask your local fire department for assistance.
- During a power outage, use a flashlight—keep fresh batteries for it.
- Inspect exit doors and windows and make sure they’re working properly.
- Students should know how to properly notify the fire department using the 911 system.
- Always participate in fire drills and practice escape routes and evacuation plans.
- Take EVERY alarm seriously—it could be the real event!
- Don’t overload electrical outlets and use extension cords properly.
- Don’t burn candles.
- Smoke only where allowed, and preferably outside the building.
- Check your school’s rules about using electrical appliances in your room.
- Use a surge protector for your computer. Plug the protector directly into an outlet.
- Learn to properly use and maintain heating and cooking appliances.

**NOTE:** *The Center for Campus Fire Safety is a non-profit organization devoted to reducing fires at campuses across the nation through education advocacy. A collection of free resources for campus fire safety professionals to use are available at the Center’s website, including lesson plans, presentations and more. Visit the Center’s website at [www.campusfiresafety.org](http://www.campusfiresafety.org) to learn more.*

*Additional information is also available through Campus Firewatch ([www.campus-firewatch.com](http://www.campus-firewatch.com)) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) at [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org).*

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